Kelvin Biodiversity Network CONFERENCE: The River Kelvin- History and Natural History

ABSTRACTS

Roger Downie (President, Glasgow Natural History Society) and Sally Johnson (Chair, Friends of the River Kelvin)

Welcome and Introduction

John Hume (John lectured in industrial and economic history at the University of Strathclyde 1964-84, then worked for Historic Scotland until 1999. He has a particular interest in the industries of the West of Scotland, especially those of the Clyde and Kelvin)

The River Kelvin: route and resource from pre-history to the 20th century

In this presentation, I will look first at the role of the Kelvin and its valley in relation to transport and communications in west central Scotland. The main body of the talk will be an examination of the river as a source of water-power and process water for a wide range of industries, from the Middle Ages to the later 20th century.

Cath Scott (Natural Environment Officer -Biodiversity and Ecology, Land and Environmental Services, Glasgow City Council)

Glasgow's biodiversity; the importance of the Kelvin corridor

Glasgow's Local Biodiversity Action Plan was launched in 2001 to protect and enhance habitats and species, and raise awareness of the importance of the natural heritage. Glasgow is rich in biodiversity, which is protected through an extensive green network of designated sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Green Corridors. Nationally and locally important habitats and species can be found in the urban environment. Partnership projects have delivered key targets for management, restoration and creation of wetland, woodland and grassland habitats. The River Kelvin is a well-loved major wildlife corridor in Glasgow connecting people to nature and forming the framework of the green network.

Willie Yeomans (Clyde River Foundation)

Are we caring for the Kelvin? Biodiversity research and public engagement

The Clyde River Foundation (CRF) is a local charity which researches the ecology of the Clyde and its tributaries and promotes environmental education and community engagement throughout the catchment. The Kelvin sub-catchment represents approximately 12% of the total Clyde system river length. The Kelvin is recovering ecologically from more than a century of man-made pollution and physical change. Since 2002, the CRF has monitored the fish and invertebrate communities and species at key sites to generate long-term data sets and to investigate specific management issues. Other scientific work has included fish habitat surveys of the main tributaries; assessing effects of flood defence and land drainage on channel sinuosity; and mapping the occurrence of invasive, non-native riparian plants. CRF education programmes have worked from P3 to PhD levels across the Kelvin system and we reconnect people of all ages with the river to improve environmental

stewardship. Recently, we have developed community engagement projects in close collaboration with the River kelvin Angling Association and the residents of Twechar, in the upper catchment. This paper will provide a brief overview of previous, ongoing and planned CRF work in and around the Kelvin, and ask whether we are taking sufficient care of 'Glasgow's second river'.

Keith Watson (Curator of Natural History, Glasgow Museums)

The changing flora of the Kelvin

Reviewing historical records from herbarium specimens and old literature, and comparing with the many modern field records, readily reveals that the riparian flora of the Kelvin is constantly changing. Much of this is in response to the actions of humans over the last 150 years or so. Many years of engineering, landform changes and pollution, in addition to changing attitudes to bankside land management, have dramatically altered the habitat that the current flora has inherited. A few native species are long gone but many are still present, but the abundance and diversity of non-native species is now an obvious feature of the lower urban stretches. Is this change in species composition a negative development and should we be trying to put the clock back to a previous time? Or should we be celebrating the floral diversity that we now find and admire the dynamic nature of our ever changing flora?

Katherine Jones (Public affairs manager, SW Scotland region, RSPB Scotland)

Connecting people to the Kelvin: celebrating and enhancing our city's wildlife

The river Kelvin offers a fantastic opportunity for people to connect with nature in the heart of the city. Winding through some of Glasgow's most deprived communities, as well as the more well-heeled West End, the river lays down the challenge to us of how to engage more people, from a wider audience, with our city's wildlife. RSPB research has shown that children play out in nature less than ever before, which is creating a generation disconnected from nature, and this talk will explore some of the work that RSPB Scotland, alongside our many local partners, is doing around the river Kelvin to start to turn this trend around.

Neil Phillips (Sustainable energy consultant)

Power from the Kelvin: past and future

As many as ten mills have used the water power of the Kelvin within the current city boundary in the past, and the weirs which maintained a head of water are still in place. Given the overall policy to increase Scotland's usage of renewable energy sources, the talk will discuss the economic viability and practical prospects of harnessing the Kelvin's energy for modern purposes.

Gillian Dick (Glasgow City Council Place Strategy and Environmental Infrastructure)

How the Kelvin makes a great place

This talk will outline the City's emerging development plan and its placemaking policy. It will discuss how the environment of the Kelvin contributes to a great place.